

LEVEL FIVE: PERFORM CONSISTENTLY

The first four levels of this model are aimed at the mastery and development of the various skills that a goalkeeper will want to learn. From learning the skills and then replicating them at speed, under fatigue as well as under pressure; these four stages are all 'formative' in nature. After mastering the skills through each of these four stages the goalkeeper then begins to start the 'functional' stages of the model. It is these stages that focus more on how well the skills are performed as they emphasise the importance of performing the skills optimally on a regular basis in competition. The next level of my Levelled Progression model is:

LEVEL 5: PERFORM THE SKILL VERY WELL, AT SPEED, UNDER FATIGUE, UNDER PRESSURE, CONSISTENTLY [17-21yrs]

At this level the importance of winning and being successful increases. Teams and individuals put more and more importance on performing the skills as effectively as they possibly can to ensure successful results over a prolonged period of time. The goalkeeper's goals/targets will now be constantly focused on keeping the consistency of their performance as high as they possibly can. It will be important to have a strong set of goalkeeping principles as a basis to enable performances to be maintained to a high standard regularly. Having these principles does not automatically guarantee performances will be high in every game, but it will provide a vital reference point to the goalkeeper if their performances ever begin to regress.

In preparation for match days on the training field, the goalkeeper will use their 'Training Brain' which has a greater allowance for the occurrence of mistakes than when in competition. Whenever the goalkeeper is performing in competition, they use their 'Competition Brain' which has a significantly lower tolerance for the occurrence of mistakes. This is not to say the competition brain isn't present in Levels 1-4, but as these are formative stages making mistakes at these levels are tolerated more akin to that of the training brain. This is because the aim of Levels 1-4 are to improve the goalkeeper's skill execution rather than their consistency.

In regard to training consistency into the sessions of the goalkeeper, it will become more important to include drills/exercises that can provide recordable measurements and meaningful statistics that can be fed back to the goalkeeper to show their performance. This allows these types of drills to be repeated regularly and therefore used as performance markers when looking for consistency.

Also, a set of Game Markers can be agreed between goalkeeper and coach that both will mark the goalkeeper on and review the scores together regularly to discuss performance patterns of the goalkeeper throughout the season. I have created my own MSG Performance Model for this very purpose and have effectively used it to highlight progression/regression areas to goalkeepers as well as formulating personalised periodised training plans for them based on their current form and performance.

The goalkeeper will need to focus more time to their physical conditioning as well, as they move through the Minor and Under 21 footballing grades in preparation for fully joining the Senior grade ranks if not already. They will need to increase their athletic ability as well as their speed, power and strength to not only be able to complete with the increased levels of performance but to also compete with/against those players who have already fully physically matured.

At this age group there is also the possibility of receiving a call up to represent their County. These grades are always seen as precursors to joining the County Senior team at some future date and as such performances at this stage of development are scrutinised more thoroughly than before. Although, in my opinion any players performance at this level should not be used as an indicator of future success but instead noted as a marker for possible future development.

Making the County team will also have other aspects that the goalkeeper will be required to deal with. As with the increase in scrutiny the goalkeeper may also need to deal with more trivial levels of fame as they begin to grow a credible reputation with their performances. This is where consistency can lead to the goalkeeper having an increased level of expectancy in regard to their performance which also adds to the importance of performing as expected (Accountability).

The goalkeeper will also need to become fully confident in using 'Effective Communication' to the team playing in front of him, inclusive of the management. Effective Communication is the most important skill that any goalkeeper must have if they want to be consistent in their performances, let alone a successful goalkeeper. Now entering into age grades that move away from a total fun aspect to introduce a more serious competitive mentality, the goalkeeper must be able to put personal friendships aside and dish out praise and constructive criticism in equal measure no matter the recipient[s]. For more on Effective Communication you can go to my website and look for the article there.

Through the 'formative' levels 1 – 4, the coach should be looking for the goalkeeper to perform the techniques/skills effectively. Is it consistency the coach is looking for? No. For the formative levels the coach is looking to 'Spot & Fix' imperfections in techniques, intensity levels, concentration, distractions etc. rather than looking for perfection every time.

There is always the possibility of the goalkeeper moving through the levels faster than expected and in such cases, if they have completed the formative levels at a younger age, there is no problems with introducing consistency earlier than normal. By not moving the goalkeeper forward when ready, even if it is earlier, it can have detrimental consequences on their development. Once the goalkeeper moves into the fifth level of the progression model, then and only then can the goalkeeper/coach aim for consistency in skill execution.

